

The Amicable Reconciliation of the
DISSENTERS
TO THE
Church of England:

BEING

A Model or Draught for the *Universal Accommodation* in the Case of Religion,
and the Bringing in all Parties to Her Communion.

Humily presented to the Consideration of Parliament.

WHEREAS there are several parties of Christians in the Nation, who must and will ever differ in their Opinions about the Church and Discipline of it, in the Question which is of Christ's Institution, it is not our Disputes about the Church as *Particular* (which are rather to be mutually forbore, and every party left herein to their own Perswasion) but a common Agreement in what we can agree, and that is in the Church as *National*, must heal our Breaches.

The Catholics are for one Universal Organical Church throughout the World, whereof the Pope is Head according to some, and the Bishops Convened in a general Council according to others.

That there is a Catholick Church Visible on earth, as well as Invisible, whereof CHRIST is Head, who was on Earth, and is now Visible in Heaven, is past doubt also with Protestants: But that this Church is *Organical* and under the Government either of a *Monarchy* by the Pope, or of an *Aristocracy* by a *General Council*, it seems a thing not possible in nature, because neither can any *Oecumenical Council* ever be Called, nor any *One* man be sufficient to take on him the Concernments of the whole World.

A Political Church, is a Community of Christians brought into an Order of Superiority and Inferiority by an Head and Members, organized for the Exercise of that Government which is proper to it: But the whole Earth is not capable of any such Order, And Councils therefore which are gather'd out of several Countries, or of Bishops belonging to more Dominions than of one Supreme Power may be had for mutual Advice and Concord, but not for Government.

A Nation, Empire, or Kingdom, which consists of one Supreme Magistrate and People, who are generally Christians are capable of such an Ecclesiastical polity, and a National Church Political in England is to be asserted and maintained.

The Church of England then is a Political Society of all the Christians in the Land, united in the King as Head, and organized by the Bishops, for the executing those Laws or Government which he chooses for their spiritual Good and the publick peace.

There is this difference between a Church *National*, the Church *Catholick*, and *Particular* Churches: The two latter are of *Divine Right* and *Essential* Consideration, but the former is and can be only of *Humane Institution*, for it is manifestly *Accidental* to the Church of Christ that the chief Magistrate and the whole People should be *Christian*.

Distinguish we here of the Government of the Church as *Internal* belonging to the *Spirit*, and *External* which belongs to *Men*: And of the *External* Regiment thereof, which is either *Formal* belonging to the *Ministers*, or Officers of Christ; or *Objective* belonging to the *Magistrate*: the one being only by the *Key*, the other by the *Sword*. Whether the Community now of Christians in England may be accounted a National Church in respect to any Formal

Government of it, we leave for dispute to others; let them judge according to the foregoing Definition of a political Church: But that the main body of the Nation are, or may be constituted a proper Political Church National in respect to that External Objective Regiment, which is, or should be exercised by the Bishops as the proper Organs thereof under the King, is what we hold reasonable, and would lay as the Foundation Stone of Peace, in the matter of Religion between all persons in the Kingdom.

Let the Parliament therefore we have, be heartily for the publick good and thriving of England, which must and can be only by an entire Liberty of Conscience in opposition to the narrow Spirit of any single party or faction, and when such a Parliament as this shall set themselves about the Business of Union to purpose, a Bill should be brought in, Entituled, *An Act for declaring the Constitution of our Church of England*.

A Parliament is the Representative of the whole Nation and no doubt but by Consent and Agreement they might (upon the account mentioned) *Make* a new Constitution, and much more may they *Declare* the Constitution of it.

It should be declared then in such a Bill or Act that the Church of England consists of the King as the Head, or *pars Imperans*, who is to give Laws thereto, and all the several Assemblies of Christians which he shall tolerate, as the *pars subdita*, or Body.

Some Discrimination between the *Tolerable* and *Intolerable* is indeed never to be gainsaid by any wise and good man; unto whom there is no Liberty can be desirable, which is not consistent at least with these three things, the *Articles* of our Creed, a *Good Life*, and the Fundamental Government of the Kingdom.

It is not for any private persons, but a Parliament, to prescribe the terms of National Communion: But we would have all our Assemblies that are Tolerable, to be made *Legal* by such an Act (and thereby parts of the National Church) as well as the Parochial Congregations.

The Church here therefore must come under a double consideration, as the Church of Christ, and as the Church of England. Take the Church as the Church of Christ, and there must be (as we have said at first) endless Controversie about this point, who are the true Members of it; but take it under the consideration as *National*, and there will be none at all, for those must be Members whom the Head by a Law does allow to be parts of the Body, and the King under this notion only is made Head of the Church by the Statute, that is, as it is called *Ecclesia Anglicana*.

The Protestant Dissenters of all sorts, as well as the Conformists, will acknowledge the King to be Supreme coercive Governour over all Persons, and in all Causes, Ecclesiastical and Civil, throughout his Dominions; And will not those who are *Roman Catholics* do the like? Did they not do so in Henry the Eighth's time, when they were generally such? Again, the Dissenters of all sorts, even the Congregationalists of every Sect, are ready to submit to any power legally derived from the King, and upon such an account will

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admit of a superintendency of the Bishops, as Ecclesiastical Magistrates under him, when they cannot own any Authority that they have over other Ministers from *Jesus Christ*; and will not Papists also be subject to all Authority that is exercised legally in his Name, howsoever they may question the spiritual Title of the English Clergy and their succession?

We would have the Bishops then (*qua Bishops*, as distinct in Office from *Priests*) declared no other than the King's Officers whose power is but *Objectively Ecclesiastical*, and to act *Circa Sacra* only, by Vertue of his Authority and Commission.

As *Jehoshaphat* did commit the Charge incumbent upon him as Supreme Magistrate, in regard to all *Matters of the Lord*, unto the care of *Amariah*, being Chief Priest, and in regard to the *King's Matters* unto *Zebadiah*, being as the Chief Justice of the Realm: so should the Diocesan Bishop be in our Ecclesiastical, as the Judges are in Civil Matters the Substitutes altogether of His Majesty, and execute his Jurisdiction.

This is indeed a State point which was thoroughly canvassed by *Henry the Eighth*, whose Divines did agree on two Orders alone, *Priest* and *Deacon*, to be of Divine Appointment, and that the Superiority of a Bishop over a Presbyter, or of one Bishop over another, was but by the *Positive Laws of Men* only, as appears in that Authentick Book then put out, entitled, *The Necessary Erudition*: And consequently, that the Bishop could not have, or exert any Jurisdiction over the Subject unless warranted and derived from the King without danger of a *Premunire*; which made *Bonner* (with others) hold his Bishoprick by Commission.

Upon this ground, if it should please His Majesty to chuse some persons of the *Dissenters* to this Office, authorizing them to it no otherwise, than by a like Commission (which they should also hold, with the Judges, *Quam diu se bene gesserint*): As none of them could scruple then the acceptance, so must a Union from that day forward commence in England; especially if he would not leave filling up the Vacancies that fall, with such, till they in some measure equal the *Conformists*.

We are sensible unto what Distress the Ministers of a Particular Congregation of all sorts may be brought in the exercise of Discipline over some potent, turbulent, and refractory Members; and what relief he might find in such an external Ecclesiastical Officer as this: We are sensible how many inconveniencies of Congregational Episcopacy may by this means onely be salved.

Their work in general should be to supervise the Churches of all parties in their Diocesses, that they walk according to their own principles, in due order, agreeable to the Gospel, and the peace of one another. And more particularly in the observance of all Laws and limitations, rules or Canons, which the King as Supreme Head, shall by advice of a Convocation, or the consent of his three Estates in Parliament, make on purpose, and impose upon them, with respect both to the publick emolument, and the safety of his own Person, Dignity, and Dominions.

For example, suppose this to be one Canon or Injunction, That no *Novice*, but such as are Grave Men only among the *Sects*, be admitted to be Teachers. Another, this, That the doors be kept open in all *Conventicles* for any that will to come in and hear, that no Sedition be there hatched or broached. There are such and many the like positions may be found, very fit to be laid on some persons, not needful for others, and it is Time, and the Trial, and Experience which must be the Mother to bring them forth, and cultivate them after, to their best advantage.

To the making such Canons, we humbly motion a third Clerk for the Convocation, to be added to the two in every Diocese, and chose out of the *Dissenters* with indifferent respect to all sorts of them, that mutual satisfaction and concord may thereby be prosecuted with unanimity of heart and good will throughout all the Churches: And the two Provinces of *Canterbury* and *York* should Unite in this Convocation for the making them one National Church, and not two Provincial ones in a diverse Assembly.

By this means shall one Organ more be added to this great political Society for deriving an influence from the Head to these parts of the Body as well as others, which now seem neglected, and to have no care taken of them.

The more especial business of such an equally Modell'd Convocation should be the revising the book of Canons, for the revering the main body of them, having been fitted to that narrow scantling which is unworthy the Church of England, and for the leaving only those, and making new (as we have exemplified in one or two for instance sake even now) which do, and will suit to that larger Constitution thereof intended by this Paper.

And having now said thus much for Explanation of this Design, we must say some little also in favour of it.

The Design of such an Accommodation as this, shall advance not lessen the outward power and honour of the Bishop, extending it over those who before had no conscientious regard for their Function: while yet it would ease them of the tremendous burden of such a *Cura animarum* they take on them otherwise, as must be of impossible performance.

This Design (which is suppos'd to find us in our Divisions, and not to make any) shall by little and little (with God's blessing on it) cool Animosities, and enkindle Charity and Holiness among all parties, which now is so much wanting, while those that are Catholics, and those that are Protestants, and much more those that are Conformists, and those that are Nonconformists, do agree in the substance of one Christianity, having the same Scriptures, the same Articles of Faith in the three Creeds, and the same rule of Manners in the Decalogue, *There is one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*. They cannot indeed have both Communion in the same External Worship, but they can have it in the Internal Adoration of the same blessed Trinity, and in One Hope of our calling unto eternal Life through *Christ Jesus*. They must Separate into several Congregations, but there shall be no Schism in the Body by this means for all that.

For as while the Supreme Power allows only the Parochial Meetings, as established by Law, it hath bin accounted Schism to go to Separate Assemblies: So if the Scene be altered, and these Separate Congregations be also made Legal, this Schism, or mens being called *Schismatics*, in that regard, must vanish, and be at an end. Indeed these divers Congregations will Accuse one another as guilty of Sin and Schism before God, for each separating from the others Communion, and threaten his Judgment: but so long as there is no separating from the Church whereof the King is Head, while he tolerates the Meetings of both, and makes them parts of it as National, there shall be no prosecution of Law against any, but all quiet, as fellow-Members upon that account.

Onely, as to the *Roman Catholics*, it is not indeed for them to imagine that a Protestant King and Parliament should allow of their *Mass* in Publick, as they do of the Service Book. This were not to tolerate the Papists, but to set up Popery whereas the Determining what is to be permitted to one Party, and what to another, so as no Detriment may be brought to the Church or State, and no Sin or Guilt upon the Nation by that permission, is a nice thing, and the business of this Parliament.

There is one Motion farther should be added, and that is for another Bill also to be brought in to take away Pluralities, (which is the Pest of our present Conforming Clergy) I mean both of *Living*s and *Dignities* impartially, to this end, that the King may have wherewithal to engage those he receives into the Church thus enlarged, and consequently restores to their Labours, by this Accommodation; for that is a thing will make the favour indeed significant to such persons.

I will conclude with one Argument for what I have proposed. There is no power given upon earth for any man to command that which he in his Conscience does judge to be Sin. *Non datur potestas ad malum*. But to conform in all things to the present Church according to Law, is Sin in the judgment of *Dissenters*, *Catholics*, and others; and the Late King was a Dissenter of one sort himself. The King therefore that was so lately, could not really put the *Catholics* upon Conformity, and if he would appear equal to all his People, he could not put any other *Dissenters* on it neither, for the same Cause. That which the Law requires was both in his Conscience and in theirs, a thing prohibited of God. He could not therefore put the Laws in Execution being against God. And if He could not do it acting only but as an honest Man that abides by his Principles: we have no reason to apprehend that so good a King and Queen as we have now, should be ever brought to do it, Maugre all the Enticements of the Church of England, or Frowns of the Church of Rome.

F I N I S.